



MAY 2023 | VOL 3 ISSUE 3

THE POST DISPATCH

THE LATEST NEWS AND UPDATES FROM
COLORADO POST

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

POST Welcomes New Deputy Director

Confused by the picture on the right? Well, don't be. We are happy to welcome our new Deputy Director, Ron Ryan, to the POST family. Ron is going to be a tremendous addition, bringing a valuable skill set to the unit. There is a small biography for Ron below, but he will also be accompanying myself and the POST staff around the state to try to meet as many of you in person as possible. Without further ado...

Ron: I am excited to join POST and look forward to working with all our partners and the POST team. Public safety has always been a passion of mine, and like many, I started down the service path as a volunteer firefighter and EMT-I.

Once I experienced the impact I could have on my community as a peace officer, I was committed to the role. I spent 30 years in the mountains of Aspen and Pitkin County in various law enforcement positions, with the last ten years as Undersheriff.

After leaving "the valley" I worked as an investigator for the Office of the Inspector General - Department of Corrections, and most recently in the Special Prosecutions Unit of the Colorado Attorney General's Office. I have always seen training as paramount to our increasingly demanding safety efforts, and I have dedicated decades



as a field training officer, in-house trainer, and adjunct instructor for a community college academy.

In 2015 I was honored to have attended the FBI National Academy, because learning never ends. In my free time I gain balance through camping (the farther from civilization the better), doing poorly at golf, lazing about with my dog Java, and spending time with my wife and family.

As we are already into May, and National Police Week is just around the corner, **I want to acknowledge and thank all our amazing peace officers for putting our communities' needs ahead of their own and continuing to serve with honor during these challenging times** for our profession. Whatever your role and position in law enforcement, please know that you are appreciated!

Let's Make Law Enforcement Stronger by Committing to Stellar Academy Training

In reflecting on Law Enforcement Officers Appreciation Month, and the upcoming Peace Officer's Memorial Day, we appreciate the courage of those who wear the badge and place themselves in physical risk. We also appreciate the true north of the profession—doing the right thing, the right way, for the right reason. As peace officers, you often find yourself called upon to protect victims and intervene in dangerous situations. In such situations, it is important to act with emotional awareness, empathy, and compassion for others. **For those committed to supporting law enforcement, we have an obligation to you to ensure you have the tools and training you need to serve and protect the public.**

LE APPRECIATION EVENTS

- May 13: 35th Annual Candlelight Vigil
- June 2: Law Enforcement Torch Run for Colorado Special Olympics

As Colorado Attorney General, I have the honor of serving as Chair of the Peace Officer Standards and Training Board, or POST. Together, POST and **my office are working to improve law enforcement training by completely redesigning how and what we teach at law enforcement academies.** This work is critical because how we help recruit and train future law enforcement officers will shape the future of this noble profession. I would like to share with you the core values, or mindsets, that we at POST are thinking about as the “true north” for the future of the profession. As we redesign the curriculum, we will focus on creating more opportunities for what is known as experiential learning or reality-based training. The goal of this training is to enable recruits to practice the skills necessary in simulated environments so they are best prepared for actual situations recruits face when they become peace officers. It's often said that we learn not when we succeed, but when we fall short; in those times, we have a tremendous opportunity to learn. And **experiential learning in the academy affords cadets to fail and learn when actual lives are not on the line.**

In redesigning Colorado's academy curriculum, we can help peace officers meet the challenges they will face on the job with the best possible mindsets. To that end, as part of our redesign process, we identified a set of core values, or mindsets, that will be incorporated throughout the entire curriculum because they are foundational to effective policing. By articulating these mindsets and seeking to develop them,

POST is working to keep our peace officers safe, enabling them to perform their duties successfully, and building trust with the community members they serve.

A critical mindset is **prioritizing respect for life in all encounters**. All human life is sacred and it should be our goal that everyone goes home at the end of a situation. But there are times that you will be placed in a situation where you will have to protect the life of a victim, a fellow peace officer, a community member, a person in crisis, or even a suspect. And this may mean putting the lives and safety of others before your own. That is the greatest and highest form of public service; and for that, you each have my highest gratitude and respect. Throughout the history of law enforcement, a primary goal has been maintaining public order by **reducing, preventing, and managing behaviors associated with conflict**. Sometimes, this conflict is a result of previous trauma, or a mental health issue, and cannot be understood as a person just “acting out.” To prepare for such situations, we’re working to further emphasize de-escalation tactics like those found in the training module known as Integrating Communications, Assessment and Tactics, or ICAT. The goal of such tactics is to maximize the likelihood of a peaceful resolution and minimize the likelihood of the use of force, leading to safer outcomes for officers, suspects, and the community. A cornerstone of the entire criminal justice system is the **respect for, and commitment to, the rule of law**. By upholding the Constitution and our laws as the foundation of all our work in the

criminal justice system, we can ensure we fully protect the rights of all of our community members and fulfill our legal responsibilities as peace officers. Ensuring the rights of all parties increases the public trust in the legitimacy of the criminal justice system.

We must also **recognize that the primary goal of policing is to promote safe communities through crime prevention and community policing**. Preventing crime means that we keep community members from becoming victims, instead of just responding after they have already been victimized. To prevent crimes effectively, law enforcement officers must earn the public trust and the support of the community. This follows from hard work that includes building relationships with the community and ensuring that force is only used when absolutely necessary.



I cannot emphasize enough how important **respect for all** is. This requires a commitment to treating all individuals with dignity, fairness, and respect no matter who they are, what they are accused of, any attitude they may have demonstrated, what they look like or who they love. Respect

requires a professional curiosity to better understand those who present and act differently than us and to act with respect even in the heat of the moment. Respect must be given to everyone including toward the person you may have just had to physically restrain.

One of the most challenging parts of being a peace officer is making quick decisions under pressure. Sometimes these decisions will have to be made in a split second, with limited information, and will be scrutinized for years to come. That is why **ethical decision-making and problem-solving** is so important.

As part of this ethical decision-making process, we should ask ourselves not only can we take an action, but should we take that action?



This includes identifying problems, developing effective options, seeing and eliminating unethical options, and selecting from the best ethical alternatives when implementing solutions.

The single best tool to avoid conflict and unnecessary uses of force is to use empathy and emotional intelligence as part of an **effective communication** strategy. What this means is really listening to another person in a situation and doing your best to communicate in a way the other person can understand. By seeking to understand another person's point of view, you will be able to better gain voluntary compliance and cooperation, which should always be our goal.

As you all know, and indeed are motivated by, the role of a peace officer above all is to serve their community. This means that officers must develop **community awareness and knowledge**.

Understanding the specific community you serve is one of the greatest skills to help you serve effectively. This work requires time as well as deliberate, intentional effort, but it is well worth it. It will help avoid unintentional pitfalls that can damage the relationship between the peace officer and the community, leading to less cooperation or even hostility. Understanding your community better can help build trust and partnerships, thereby enhancing public safety.

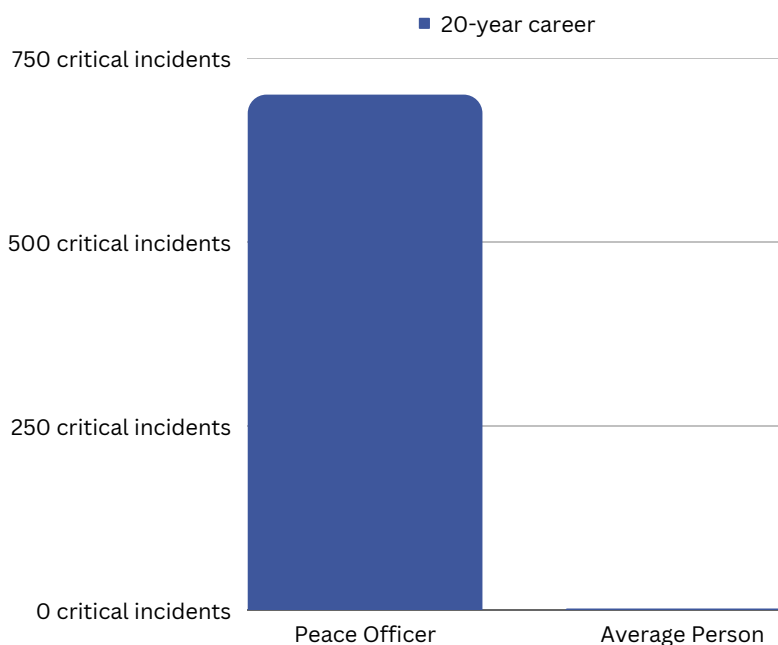
As a peace officer, you witness the very best, and the very worst, of people. Mental health professionals estimate that over a 20-year career, the typical peace officer will experience over 700 critical incidents, while

the average person over the same period will experience two. That is just one reason why **officer wellness** is so important. You cannot take care of your community if you aren't taking care of yourself.

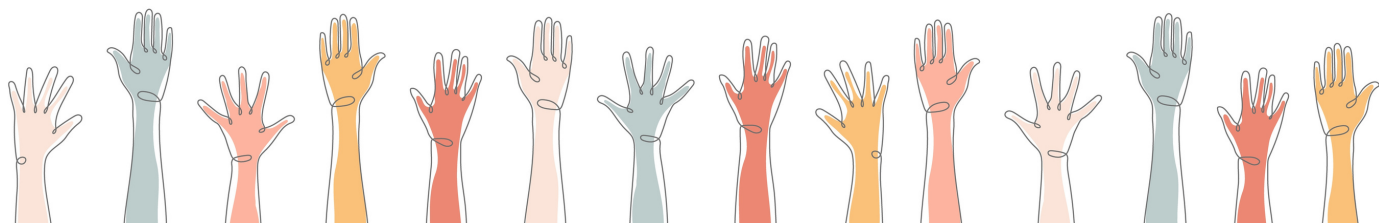
Like an already full cup, adding more trauma to a person already carrying considerable trauma can cause an overflow. When this happens to a peace officer, the impact can be life changing. This trauma affects not only the peace officer, but their families, their fellow officers, and the community members they interact with. Officer wellness, at its core, means investing in a culture that values and creates space for mental health and wellness. This is a lifelong effort and an important value and should include providing support for the well-being of for each of you, as well as your families. It's important to acknowledge that this profession calls on all officers to build the resilience needed for you to have a long and successful career in law enforcement. That starts with greater emotional awareness and a commitment to wellness.

Lastly, peace officers must have **situational awareness**. This is a commitment to maintaining awareness of one's immediate environment and its changes, understanding what is happening at a given moment, and anticipating what may happen in the immediate future. Situational awareness doesn't only mean being aware of your surroundings, but also developing an awareness of how one's own behavior or

psychological response may impact those around you. This awareness can play a pivotal role in whether a situation becomes unnecessarily escalated, or de-escalated, allowing everyone to go home when a situation is resolved.



The mindsets outlined above - the values that should shape and inform peace officers' approach to their work - are just some of the core skills the Academy Redesign project intends to imbed as the foundation to effective training for a long and fulfilling law enforcement career. These mindsets are not merely important building blocks for new cadets, they are values for the entire profession. As we continue to advance the work of improving law enforcement academy training, we would welcome your thoughts and feedback on these mindsets and how best to help cadets develop them.



Academy Director Lt. Jackie Pearson Featured in a Police Article

POST is excited to share that Police1 has done a profile story about our local academy director Lieutenant Jackie Pearson from Fort Collins Police Services. Currently, there are 35 POST academies in Colorado, and Lt. Pearson is one of eight female leaders to run such an academy. The article discussed her 26-year career in law enforcement, leadership achievements as a woman in a male dominated field, how she successfully embeds wellness into the academy, and her perspectives on creative recruitment. Please read "[A day in the life of a police recruitment and academy director](#)" to learn more about Lt. Pearson's work, and reach out to her with questions or kudos.



Left to right: Chief Jeff Swoboda, Staff Psychologist Dr. Dan Dworkin, Academy Director Lt. Jackie Pearson, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser, Deputy Chief Greg Yeager, Corporal Al Brown.

TRAINING

Resilience Training Program Linked to Improving Mental Health

Studies continuously find that law enforcement professionals are at high risk for experiencing stress, burnout, and other mental health issues. That's why holistic approach to wellness is an important component in keeping officers physically, mentally and emotionally prepared for the demands of their jobs.

The Resilience Training Program (RTP) developed by researchers at the University of Buffalo, has shown promise in improving first responders' mental health, including reductions in symptoms of anxiety and depression.

The RTP consists of eight weekly group sessions, each focused on a different aspect of resilience-building, such as mindfulness, emotion regulation, and social support. The program also provides individual coaching sessions to help participants apply the skills they learned in the group sessions to their daily lives.

While the progress that was made during the RTP was maintained at a six-month follow-up, more research is needed to determine the long-term efficacy of resilience-building interventions, and to identify the most effective approaches for different types of first responders.



Very Small Agency Backfill Grant Program

The Very Small Agency Backfill program is designed to assist “very small agencies” with schedule coverage so their staff can attend law enforcement training. POST will reimburse the providing agency up to \$50/hr. for each hour their staff works under this program, which includes benefit costs. Additional funds may be requested to cover travel time, lodging costs and mileage for officers providing the backfill.

Who is eligible? Agencies with 10 or fewer peace officers. It can be used to backfill for certified officers as well as sworn detention officers. Larger agencies will be given consideration on a case-by-case basis.

How to apply? Law enforcement agencies interested in applying for grant funding must complete an application for funding at least 30 days in advance of the training. More information [HERE](#).

Agencies interested in reimbursing their own employees' overtime for coverage should request funding from the In-Service grant program or submit a request to their training region.

Lethality Assessment Program

According to the 2022 Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, **in 2021 there were 91 fatalities from 61 domestic violence incidents in Colorado.**



According to the 2022 Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, **in 2021 there were 91 fatalities from 61 domestic violence incidents in Colorado.**

The statistics are horrifying, but together we can change that.

POST received an Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant to implement Colorado Domestic Violence Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), which involves an 11-question screen and a subsequent follow up phone call to a community-based victim advocate. This program focuses on the prevention of intimate partner homicides and connecting victims to community support system.

Here is how it all works:

- A law enforcement officer who is investigating a domestic violence incident decides to do the LAP screen with the victim;
- The victim agrees to the screen, and the officer asks the 11 questions;
- If the victim gives positive answers to a certain number of questions, then they would be determined to be “screened in” to the protocol.

This would prompt the officer to call the local community-based advocate and attempt to connect them with the victim to put some safety measures in place.

Research has shown that in the year prior to a domestic violence fatality, only 4% of victims had contacted a woman's shelter. The entire LAP process should take just 5-10 minutes, and can help save lives!

Currently there are fifteen agencies utilizing the LAP protocol in Colorado. Mark Deaton, a retired police officer from the Longmont Department of Public Safety, is the state coordinator who trains law enforcement and community support systems on LAP.



OTHER UPDATES & HELPFUL RESOURCES

Learning To Recognize Signs of Unsafe Child Care

The Safe Child Care Task Force was found to address the many challenges that faced and continue to face the child care industry; support licensed and family, friend and neighbor care providers; and ensure no family ever faces the tragic loss of a child in an unsafe care setting.

Data related to deaths in unlicensed child

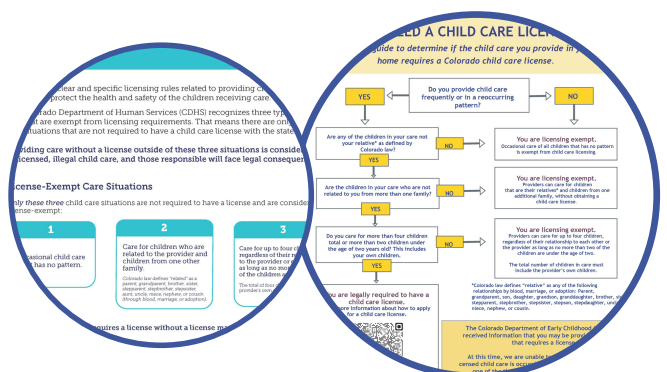
care facilities that are caring for too many children and breaking the law has shown a light on how important it is for Colorado to continue to address the safety of children in all types of settings.

Recommendations from this task force represent a diverse set of ideas and strategies to help:

- Educate families and communities;
- Strengthen partnerships across sectors that interact with early childhood, and
- Examine processes, rules and regulations that address safe child care.

They were formed with the input of stakeholders across the early childhood field, including nonprofits, state and local government, law enforcement, child welfare, parents, and child care providers, both licensed and family, friend and neighbor. One such recommendation is to develop and implement a plan to involve, educate and support first responders.

Below graphics were designed specifically for first responders to include information needed to identify and respond to claims of unsafe care, and a training to help them understand the different types of approved child care, signs of unsafe care, how to read a child care license, etc. **Please click on each bubble to view, print and distribute!**



New Members Join the Board

Chief David Krouse, City of Fruita. Chief David Krouse has almost 30 years of law enforcement experience. Throughout his career with both the Fruita and Grand Junction Police Departments, Chief Krouse has held positions as a patrol officer, hostage negotiator, crime prevention officer, and public information officer. He supervised several patrol teams before being assigned to the Professional Standards Unit, where he worked internal affairs, recruitment and hiring. Chief Krouse holds several instructor certifications including firearms, defensive tactics, law enforcement driving, crisis intervention, anti-biased policing, and ethics, as well as a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology/Criminology and a Master of Arts degree in Psychology. Chief Krouse is currently enrolled in the Master of Science in Military and Emergency Responder Psychology. He is also an adjunct instructor in the criminal justice program at Colorado Mesa University and serves on several policing committees and boards in Colorado. Chief Krouse is committed to promoting and enhancing mental health for first responders, military personnel, and veterans – serving those who serve. Outside of work and school, Chief Krouse most enjoys spending time with his grandchildren.



Special Agent in Charge Mark Michalek, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mark Michalek is the Special Agent in Charge of the Denver Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation which covers both Colorado and Wyoming. Mr. Michalek began his career with the FBI as a Special Agent in 2005 where he was assigned to the Houston Field Office to work violent crime. In 2014, he promoted to Supervisory Special Agent and transferred to the Violent Crime Unit of the Criminal Investigative Division at FBI Headquarters where he oversaw the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitive Program. He returned to the Houston office in 2016 where he led the public corruption squad. In 2020, Mr. Michalek was appointed as an Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the San Diego Field Office before he promoted to Section Chief of the Employee Health and Performance Section in the Human Resources Division at Headquarters. Prior to joining the FBI, Mr. Michalek served as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Air Force. Today, he still enjoys flying as well as running.



Sheriff David Lucero, Pueblo County. Sheriff David Lucero began his career in public service at age 17 upon swearing in to the Army National Guard in his native New Mexico. He joined law enforcement in 2000 with the Lamar (Co.) Police Department. Sheriff Lucero was hired with the Pueblo County Sheriff's Office in 2004, and in his 19-year career there has worked in multiple roles from Patrol Deputy to Undersheriff. On October 18, 2022, Sheriff Lucero was sworn in as the 38th Sheriff of Pueblo County. Sheriff Lucero is a graduate of the FBI National Academy Session 271 and the FBI Rocky Mountain Command College. He is a graduate of Colorado State University-Pueblo and graduated with a Master of Public Safety from the University of Virginia in May 2022. Sheriff Lucero has served as vice president and president of the Colorado Jail Association and a Technical Resource Provider for the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections. Sheriff Lucero also services as a Special Deputy U.S. Marshal assigned to the U.S. Marshals Colorado Violent Offender Task Force. In January 2023, Governor Polis appointed Sheriff Lucero to the Natural Medicine Advisory Board, which advises the Department of Regulatory Agencies on the implementation of the regulated natural medicine access program. He is the representative of past criminal justice reform in Colorado.



Sheriff Sean Smith, La Plata County. Sheriff Smith is the son of a retired Phoenix police officer and a U.S Army Veteran of Operation Desert Shield/Storm. Sheriff Smith has served in law enforcement for 25 years and is currently in his 9th year as the La Plata County Sheriff. Sheriff Smith has used his experience in corrections and social work to transform his agency into a service first organization with strong community partnerships. The Governor and Director of Public Safety have appointed Sheriff Smith to serve on several statewide boards and commissions. In 2021, Senator Bennet and Senator Hickenlooper nominated Sheriff Smith as one of three candidates for United States Marshal District of Colorado. Sheriff Smith earned a Bachelor Degree in Public Safety Administration from Grand Canyon University. Sheriff Smith resides in La Plata County with his wife of 30 years, Traci. They have three adult children and one beautiful granddaughter so far. Sheriff Smith enjoys spending time with family, traveling and he is a ski bike enthusiast.



Why Choose ABLE?

POST Board Vice Chair Chief George Dingfelder shares his experience with Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) training.

Chief Dingfelder: In the height of the unrest and demand for police reform in mid-2020, I became a Chief of Police in Monte Vista, which is a small agency of 16 officers in the vast San Luis Valley of southern Colorado. This was my first experience with municipal policing. Before I was with the state, and policing at the local level is much different. However, I believe, **the way peace officers interact with the people we serve and the expectations of our officers should be the same everywhere.**

Coming from an agency that built its reputation on professionalism, consistency and accountability, I started to research practices that would help Monte Vista Police Department improve in those areas as well.

In late 2021 we became the first rural agency in Colorado and the smallest to be accepted into the ABLE program. The Pueblo Police Department provided the training to our entire staff, including the code enforcement officers. We started 2022 with every member trained in ABLE, and it was exactly what our agency needed! ABLE emphasized the idea of policing ourselves and holding each other accountable, while raising the level of professionalism when interacting with the public. **It also helped us to significantly reduce the use of force**, which went down by 57% in the first full year of the Monte Vista Police Department being an ABLE

agency. As much as I was surprised by this number, I was more pleased that our agency is moving in the direction of having positive interactions with the community. Nothing changed in our arrest control training, policies or reporting. The only answer I have to such large of a reduction is ABLE.

POST has an initiative to bring ABLE to all interested law enforcement agencies in Colorado, and I highly encourage you to participate! ABLE is more than a program or newest coolest trend. It creates a culture of accountability and doing what's right, when no one is looking. More importantly, ABLE focuses on building trust within the department and the communities we serve. Find out more [here!](#)

March 9 & 10 Sessions

The POST Board held a work session on March 9, and a Board meeting on March 10. Three SME members: Tom Peterson, Master Trooper Pete Lawrence and Master Sergeant Robert Rabson departed their committees. POST thanks them for volunteering their time and expertise to better law enforcement training in Colorado. It was a lighter agenda this time, where the Board conducted its regular business and discussed the progress of Academy Redesign project. Detailed minutes will be available on the [POST website](#).



**FOR NEWSLETTER
INQUIRIES**

Contact
victoria.edstedt@coag.gov